

LEYTON ORIENT WALKING FOOTBALL CLUB

ORAL HISTORY

The Early Years



2015 TO 2017

COMPILED BY LEN CHESTON

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CLUB FOUNDATION

How it all began



Phill Smith remembers that in mid-2015 walking football was one of the first projects he undertook in his new health and wellbeing activator role at Leyton Orient Trust. Research undertaken around health in the borough and the Leyton Orient FC supporters indicated an older demographic, particularly in the Orient fan base as well as lower levels of physical activity than in other areas of London and the country.

Further research plus the Barclays advert of the time featuring walking football, suggested that walking football may be a way forward. The Trust decided to set up and run walking football sessions targeting people aged 50 plus as a pilot. The project was funded by Leyton Orient Trust.

The first session was advertised on the Leyton Orient FC and Leyton Orient Trust's website, as well as in the Supporters Club and local papers. The very first session took place in September 2015. Peter Kitchen, the former Orient player, was invited and duly attended to launch the session. Howard Gould, Junior and Phill Smith ran the first

session. The Trust brought some people from other sessions they were running. Besides names mentioned below, three women attended from a local care home.

Derek Myers (third in on the right) remembers the photo above being taken. He recalls the first session was attended by mainly male Orient supporters and three women recruited by the Trust. In attendance were (L to R) Peter Kitchen, Dennis Barefield, David Yude, not known, Junior, John Barrie, Graham Wood, not known, Keith Everett, Peter Bradley, Derek Myers, Phill Smith, Howard Gould. There is no record of the names of the three women at the front.

A highlight for Derek Myers was the introduction to the session by ex-Leyton Orient player Peter Kitchen who talked about his football career.

Phill Smith describes the early sessions as great fun and with brilliant feedback, although the huge variation in ability was very noticeable.

The Trust decided to run these Thursday sessions for 6 weeks through to December 2015. The Trust continued to support the sessions until June 2019 when Leyton Orient Walking FC gained Charter Standard and took over the management of the sessions. The ethos of these sessions was all about participation and enjoyment.



Above: First ever Leyton Orient walking football session - 25th September 2015





“I have made lots of really good friends”

Phill Smith talked about starting a Monday evening session in October 2015 to cater for people over 50 who were working. This was switched to Tuesday after consultation with the players and continues to this day. The players took over the running of this session in early 2016 although within the remit of the Trust. It became the early method of funding club activities. The Club formally took over the running of this session in May 2019

Phill Smith recalls other sessions being established, some in Redbridge (may have taken place in Loughton), another in Whitechapel and with a third in Hackney. Attendance was not as strong as the sessions in Leyton and after the initial pilots, these sessions were not continued.

Some players joined walking football from other programmes run by the Trust such as Man v Fat. Phill remembers Tony

Wahlhaus, Terry Russell and Mike Todd joined Football Fans In Training, another trust run group, from the walking football sessions.

In response to the continually growing numbers at the over 50's sessions, and the widening age and ability gaps. Discussions with players led to a new over 60s session starting in January 2017 – Phill Smith supported by Len Cheston, David Yude, Ted Shipp, Dave Knight, Graham Wood and Peter Bradley helped to get the sessions started. For the first 6 weeks attendances were between five and eight but after that an established group emerged and attendances began to grow. An innovation was the introduction of the cup of tea after the session that was a great success.

Phill Smith recalled that the Leyton Orient Trust were the first professional football club community trust to run regular walking football sessions in London.

Right: Training sessions from the early days



FIRST SESSION RECOLLECTIONS

Tony Wahlhaus recalls his first session was probably in October 2015. The sessions were enjoyable and run by Junior and Phill Smith. The numbers, he remembers, picked up quickly.

Tony Brooks started soon after the first session. He had been looking for a walking football session since retiring. He came to Orient after trying sessions at Enfield and East Ham. Neither had been satisfactory and he says he found his sessions at Orient much more enjoyable.

Mick Mullins highlights that prior to retiring in 2015, he had researched 'things to do' and came across walking football in an advert in a local paper. He attended his first session in January 2016, only one pitch was used and he recalls getting plenty of game time despite a good number attending the session. He was very enthusiastic about the session and recalls boring his family for a few weeks about how enjoyable the session had been.

Frank Longsworth writes, 'I first became involved with walking football in early 2016, I saw an advertisement in the local newspaper for a walking football session at Hainault Community Centre run by Leyton Orient Trust. I thought I would give it a go. I arrived a little late, it was a new venture for me, and I hadn't played football for 30 years, so I entered the Community Centre with some trepidation. When I eventually found the hall, they had already started and Junior from Leyton Orient Trust was doing warm up exercises with the players, he looked at me and

Below: An early session on the Brisbane Road pitch.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



said “Bloody hell it’s Roy Hodgson come to scout for Euro 2016” well of course everybody looked around and fell about laughing. The ice was broken, and it is the best thing that has happened to me in retirement. Reintroduced me into playing the game I love, kept me reasonably fit and I have made lots of really good friends. I am not sure but I think I was the first player at the club to be sent off for persistent running, but as a scouser I never let the facts get in the way of a good story!!’

Trevor Ridley remembers that he was playing walking football at Shooters and that he was ‘scouted’ by Tony Wahlhaus and introduced to the Orient sessions. He had found Shooters to have variable numbers and to be too much like 5-s-side. He started on Tuesday evening and found it much more enjoyable.

Len Cheston started in September 2016. He had seen the adverts in

the Supporters Club but was still working part-time. He recalls his nervousness before the first session, not having kicked a ball in anger for a long time and joining a bunch of strangers. Phill Smith allocated Peter Bradley to look after him. Peter’s advice ‘Enjoy yourself’.

Junior, one of the early coaches for the sessions, was singled out by a number of players as a key figure in establishing the sessions. His friendly approach and enthusiastic coaching were significant factors in players returning, even if by the end of the session he was on the pitch trying to score spectacular goals.

“Enjoy yourself”

FIRST GAMES & MEMORIES

Tony Wahlhaus and Phill Smith both recall that the first competitive game by a Leyton Orient walking football team was at the GLL tournament held at the Copper Box in autumn 2015. Phill thought the players would be interested in a more competitive experience. Having heard of the success of the Leyton Orient Trust sessions GLL asked Phill if the Trust would like to submit the Orient team to represent Waltham Forest. Tony Wahlhaus recalls that the players did not know each other, and it took time for the team to find its feet. The games were played outdoors in a car park by the Copper Box. The weather was atrocious. The team got to the final and lost. It started a long history of agonising defeats in the finals of the GLL Games competition. The team's first trip to Portsmouth was in February 2016. Tony Wahlhaus describes it as a brilliant day out even if the walking football result was not so good. There was great hospitality by Portsmouth Community Trust. The team travelled down by minibus. Esh Sakarya was well enough at the time to join the day out. The players went on the Fratton Park pitch before the game.

In early 2016, Paul Stephens began to build up links with local walking football sides such as Romford, Barnet and Stevenage and began to put together a fixture list. He took on the task of selecting the team and getting the team to the venue on time. His work at this stage of the club's development was much appreciated as was his enthusiastic management of the Tuesday evening sessions.

22 February 2016. Mick Mullins recalls his debut against Stevenage. He remembers it as a good day and cemented his interest in playing for the team. Orient won 4-0.

24 March 2016 An internal competition was held to help select a team for the forthcoming EFL Cup. Mick Mullins recalls being on the winning team with Dave Knight, Tony Wahlhaus, Paul Browne and Brian Rider,

24 April 2016 Arsenal away. Tony Wahlhaus and Mick Mullins both recall a mini tournament played at the Arsenal indoor hub. In one of the games, Orient had been 2-0 down but came back to win 4-3. Mick highlighted that he scored twice in this game. He remembers the major role played by Brian Rider in this game. Mick thinks this game is one of the highlights of his career. The Hub had excellent facilities, and the players got a free guided tour of the Arsenal stadium.

1 May 2016. The team travelled to Corinthians in South London. Paul Stephens wrote on the club Facebook page about Tony Brook's outstanding display that day. It led to the 'Performance of the Season' award in December. Tony Brooks has little recollection of the games.

14 May 2016 Luton. Tony Wahlhaus and Derek Myers recounted the day at Luton in the English Football League regional play-offs. Orient won their group but lost in the semi-final group to Colchester in a heavily disputed game due to Colchester's aggressive play, both verbally and



Above: Leyton Orient team at the Cove tournament, Farnborough

physically. Tony Wahlhaus says it was 'our first taste of that opponent but not the last'. Tony thought there was a three way play off with Colchester and Southend. Both players thought Orient were the best footballing team on the day.

In those early days Tony Wahlhaus recalls Orient sometimes struggled to get a team together and borrowed players from West Ham, Dave Evans was an example of this.

Derek Myers remembers a lot of early games being three touch and a wide variety in the interpretation of the rules.

27 May 2016 Fulham on the Craven Cottage pitch. Orient had two teams entered and one of the teams came back with the Club's first trophy. Tony Wahlhaus recalled Paul Browne was player of tournament. Spencer Pratten, now England over 60s captain, turned out for one of the Orient teams. Keith Everett moaned about having to change in the stands.

20 July 2016 Stevenage. Trevor Ridley remembers he was excited as it was his first competitive game for 30 years. However, the game was mired

in controversy as Orient got their first red card when Paul Stephens clashed with a Stevenage player and was sent off. It led to some ill-feeling from Stevenage towards the club that took a few of years to dissipate.

27 July 2016 Romford YMCA. Trevor Ridley recounted playing some games indoors at this venue against Romford. It was very small and not conducive to playing good football.

10 August 2016 Mick Mullins and Derek Myers remember a trip to Wimbledon. It was the day Fid Neophytou made his debut. Both recall the hybrid rule that involved the ball being played overhead height with heading allowed. Mick describes one goal from a header when an opposition player came thundering in from distance. Mick made the wise decision to get out of his way.

4 September 2016 Derek Myers recalls a trip to Farnborough to play in a tournament organised by Cove. The tournament was won by a team of Scotsmen who were rumoured to be ex-pros.



Left: Leyton Orient team prior to Fulham tournament in Wandsworth

14 September 2016. Trevor Ridley highlighted a trip to play over in Wandsworth at a tournament organised by Fulham. He thought it was one of the first games he played where he noticed that the team spirit both during the games and afterwards was starting to develop.

20 October 2016. The second GLL games took place in Brixton. Derek Myers and Tony Wahlhaus recall Orient winning through to the final comfortably but losing a vital game against Islington (Arsenal) 2-0. The team adjourned to the local Wetherspoons which Orient have continued to visit after recent GLL tournaments. For Trevor Ridley, it was another event where he saw the Orient team spirit continue to develop.

12 November 2016. Colchester away before a Leyton Orient league game. Tony Wahlhaus, Tony Brooks and Mick Mullins all remember this day. The team had to change in the disabled toilet. The conditions were awful with heavy rain and the game played in caged pitch in front of the Colchester

stadium. Paul Stephens played in goal. Colchester were physical and niggly and targeted Pat Green who took a kicking from their players and sadly never played again.

20 November 2016. Barnet at North Weald. Trevor Ridley played in goal sharing goalkeeping duties with Ray Russo. Trevor let in one goal.

11 December 2016. Len Cheston remembers making his debut alongside Phil Stevenson in the Romford League fixtures. He recalls his nervousness and Paul Browne telling him to relax and enjoy himself. He found the switch in goalkeeping needed from the handball style goals at the Score to the low wide goals difficult.

14 January 2017 Portsmouth second trip. Again Orient travelled by minibus. This time undefeated in a tournament organised by Portsmouth Community Trust. The hospitality was again excellent. On the trip back they came to massive traffic jam on the Kingston by-pass. Tony Wahlhaus, Derek Myers and Dave

Knight needed to use get out to relieve themselves and ended up manically sprinting after the bus as the traffic had moved off except Dave Knight who smoothly caught up with the bus.

15 January 2017. The team played in big tournament organised by Terry Rice. Teams came from all over southern England and the Midlands. Trevor Ridley says it was the first time the club had seen the game played very effectively in a pass and move style, not surprising given the winners Birmingham had three seasoned professional footballers playing for them. The Orient team came a very respectable third.

22 January 2017. Trevor Ridley recounted a 4-3 defeat at the Arsenal hub. Orient allowed themselves to be persuaded to play on a long pitch with boards on each side. Arsenal were able to exploit this and had a physical threat posed by the 'man in the yellow' socks who proceeded to kick everyone.

26 January 2017 saw the first ever Orient over 60s game played against Dagenham and Redbridge. A thoroughly enjoyable game ended in a 2-2 draw.

17 Match 2017. Trevor Ridley remembers a trip to play Watford on a Friday night under floodlights. The team travelled through horrific traffic and lost 2-0 in a London League game. Trevor recalls that some of his shooting posed a threat to low flying aircraft. Tony Wahlhaus remembers the game as well and recalls that 'it was played only a few days after the passing of Watford's favourite son, Graham Taylor, and I think in the foyer of the centre there was a memorial to him. That night the weather was atrocious, and we came up against a very good team who played with a very high level of technical and game management nous. I think we were learning from those experiences. We lost 0-2 but I think we came away with more than we arrived. Some games and tournaments were pivotal as we developed, this was one of them'

21 March 2017. Tony Brooks was so enthusiastic for a game, he attended a Spurs game in Swansea, got up early and drove to South West London to play in a match against Walton.



Above: Leyton Orient team that played Barnet at North Weald

OTHER MEMORIES

Sessions at Shooters: In the early day some players attended sessions at Shooters. All those who played described it very physical, more like 5-a-side for veterans.

Traveling: In the early days the team had no real home ground, so travelled all-over South-East England to play. Recollections include lifts with Tony Wahlhaus that involved detailed pre-match tactical analysis. The team were nearly always the first to arrive

and would ensure meeting afterwards for refreshments. This helped build up team spirit. November 2016. Mick organised the first Christmas meal at Zizzis in South Woodford. It was the first club social event and was a great success.

In early 2017, the Royal College of Nurses approached the Club over the production of a video about walking football. This was produced and shown at the RCN's annual conference.

Below: Leyton Orient Walking FC first Xmas meal and presentation evening



EARLY LEAGUES

London League: Tony Brooks was quite active in trying to get this League started. It was the first attempt at a League in the London area. It was based around Football Club's Community Trusts. He organised games with Arsenal, Walton, Watford and Dagenham and Redbridge before the League petered out due to lack of interest.

TRA Romford League: Following Paul Stephens departure, Tony Brooks became the club organiser for the TRA Romford League. This League carried out its fixtures and was based in Romford.



Above: Pre league match at Romford.

“High hopes”

Some of the early weaknesses of the venue and League such as lack of changing facilities, few regular referees and over-physical play as the game were played on enclosed pitches persisted over the next few years leading to Club pulling out of Leagues based at the venue. It did introduce the Club to some strong teams such as Bexley, Romford and Watford against whom the Club has enjoyed close games over the years. Trevor Ridley remembers that the high-hopes of the TRA League were soon let down although he thinks it made a major contribution to the development of the Club.



Above: By 2017 numbers had increased impressively. Enough for a tournament on the Brisbane Road pitch.



Above: Another Leyton Orient away day this time to Kent

END OF THE EARLY DAYS

This story ends with the team moving from the Trust to be an independent club in May 2017. This was not a smooth transition. Much of the success of the team in 2016 and early 2017 was down to Paul Stephens hard work and organisational skills.

However when the team become formalised and committee developed he struggled to adapt to the new model and decided to leave the club for pastures new.

The rest of the Club's history is set out on the TeamApp

EARLY PLAYERS

Dave Knight: Dave was one of the biggest enthusiast for walking football, playing regularly in the early games and a major recruiter for the Club amongst the Leyton Orient fan base. Dave sadly passed away in August 2019. An appreciation is included below at Appendix B.

Pat Green: He arrived in 2016 and immediately made an impression with his skilled play and goal scoring talents. He is remembered as a good man and for turning up for the Tuesday sessions still in his best suit and tie. Pressure of work and a brutal treatment at Colchester ended his playing with the team.

Paul Browne: A major influence on the team's playing style in the early days. Paul was noisy and full of energy. He wanted to be everywhere on the pitch. He freely offered coaching advice and sometimes became frustrated when lesser players could not keep up with him. He was the dominant player in the team from 2015 to 2017. With the Club he reached the WFA England over 50 squad. He left the Club to join Romford in 2017.

Brian Rider: He was the quiet man of the team. He was the best technical player. A horrible pass to Brian would be returned beautifully to another team mate. Whilst many team members struggled to remember to control the ball, Brian's touch was always silky smooth and always with a correctly weighted pass. Brian came to the Club carrying injuries from playing football in his youth. He was never able to conquer these old injuries and eventually withdrew. A popular and deeply respected team member.

Esh Sakarya: He started playing from the first sessions whilst in the early phase of his dementia. He possessed a neat turn of pace and could find the goal. Over the years, his dementia worsened but he managed to get to the ground at least once a week. As he struggled on the pitch, the sessions developed special Esh rules to enable him to get a touch of the ball. A popular figure at the Club, his condition worsened during the Coronavirus epidemic and he retired from playing.



Leyton Orient Walking FC

APPENDIX A

List of those interviewed



Derek Myers



Tony Wahlhaus



Tony Brooks



Phill Smith



Mick Mullins



Len Cheston



Trevor Ridley



Frank Longsworth (written submission)

APPENDIX B

Dave Knight - Appreciation

It was with the great sadness that this Saturday the Club learnt of the passing of Dave Knight, one of our founder members, regular attendees, player and advocate of walking football in support of the Club.

Only last Saturday Dave attended the Club's lap of honour round the Brisbane Road pitch to celebrate another Club success. I know we were really pleased to see him although for many of us it was the first time we had seen the impact of the cancer that so sadly defeated him. It was a tribute to the man that his passing was announced at half-time at Orient's home game against Crawley.

Dave had supported Leyton Orient walking football since those early tentative days over four years ago. He had a significant role in the Royal College of Nurses promotional video on walking football where he explained how his initial scepticism was overcome. As Dave himself said of his first try at walking football, 'I think within about five seconds I was convinced.' He then went on to actively support the development of the Friday over 60s sessions where, after a good kick-about, he would deliberate on the traumas of the Bechetti years over a cup of tea. Dave was also a regular for the pre-Orient match walking football games. Over the years Dave played more than two dozen times in various tournaments for the Club.



Dave also played a major role in the development of the Club and it was with Dave's encouragement and guidance that we made the bid for £2000 from the Leyton Orient Fans Trust (LOFT). I am sure Dave was an excellent advocate with LOFT and that ensured our bid was successful. It is that money that has enabled the Club to fund the coaching, buy new shirts and provided crucial evidence in our successful Charter Standard bid.

Dave was a positive enthusiast for walking football, actively encouraging players to join in the Supporters Club and on Orient fixture away trips. He claimed he moved at the same speed and tempo whether playing football or running with his running club which none of us would doubt. I had a few beers with Dave over the years on Orient away trips where we would talk about club developments, he was very supportive and always had a few ideas for the Club.

This week the Club will mark his passing with a few words and a minute's applause at the sessions.

25th August 2019

Walking Football Paper for consideration by the Leyton Orient Trust Working Group

Leyton Orient Trust operates as the charitable part of Leyton Orient Football Club, a professional club based in East London. LOT delivers a range of engagement and development programmes to communities based in Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Redbridge.

The vision of LOT is to: 'Realise the Potential of the communities it serves and the people it engages with'. LOT's Mission is to deliver and develop a range of programmes and interventions that are relevant, engaging and inspiring.

Since its creation in 1989 LOT has invested over £30 million in North and East London touching the lives of over 100,000 people in that time.

LOT aligns itself with the aims and objectives of Local, Regional and National Government; its agencies and the third and community sector where appropriate and of mutual benefit, in particular in the London Boroughs of Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

As a result LOT delivers the following programmes:

- Kicks in partnership with the Premier League, Sport England and MOPAC
- Female Football Development Programme with the Premier League, FA, EFLT and the GLA
- Schools Coaching Programme with the Premier League
- Inclusive United with London United; Interactive, the FA and Wembley National Stadium Trust
- Study Programmes for 14-19 year olds with Waltham Forest College
- Housing Estate Holiday Programmes with London and Quadrant Housing Association and Charlton Athletic
- Mental Health Treatment and Recovery Programme 'Coping through Football' with London Playing Fields Foundation and North and East London Mental Health Trust
- Schools Open Holiday Programme with the London Borough of Waltham Forest
- Targeted Health Improvement Programmes with Redbridge, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest Public Health Teams.

In 2015 with the appointment of the Health and Well Being Activator LOT became interested in establishing and developing Walking Football. The Football League Trust which oversees LOT was keen on developing a national programme and encouraging as many Club Trusts as possible to start programmes and enter their annual tournaments.

LOT launched the programme with support from former Orient player Peter Kitchen in September 2015 and quickly established a regular Thursday session.

As an extension of the session participants requested friendlies against other Club Trusts and groups they began to meet through wider community connections. This led to a dedicated and self-funded session being established on Tuesday evenings with an older participant's session set up on Fridays.

LOT views Walking Football as a success not only for the numbers engaged but the impact it has had on those involved and the competitive opportunities created. Some of the participants have also got involved in further targeted Health programmes run by LOT.

LOT is committed to continuing to support and develop Walking Football as a positive activity and as a progression route into other health improvement programmes. In line with its vision and mission LOT will therefore focus on improving the opportunities to play the game across Waltham Forest, Hackney, Redbridge and Tower Hamlets and open it up as a large participation activity. It will also continue to support and promote Football League Trust programmes including the annual Football League Trust Walking Football Tournaments.

In terms of playing matches LOT has encouraged participants to take the lead and participate in friendlies and leagues.

The point of development has now been reached where in terms of good governance, transparency and accountability a more formal approach to the competitive teams is required.

Moving forward there are three options for LOT and the participants to consider:

1. Continue with the informal arrangements for organising matches and running the teams
2. Establish a constituted Walking Football Club registered with the London FA and using the Leyton Orient name and branding with Trust representation on the Committee
3. Establish a constituted Club that is independent of and does not use the Leyton Orient name and branding and would not require LOT representation on the Committee unless agreed with members.

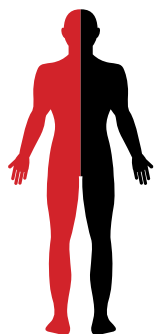
The meeting to be held on Tuesday 21st February will consider the pros and cons of each option and recommend a way forward.

If option 2 or 3 is the preferred route then a constitution, rules and operational procedures will need to be drawn up and considered by the working group. Once this is done a date can be set up for the AGM where the constitution will be agreed and election of officers can take place.



IMPACT REPORT WALKING FOOTBALL

30 participants who have been regularly attending the weekly walking football sessions in Leyton completed a health based questionnaire through the programme. The results were as follows:



The average age of our walking footballers is **63** years old. The age Range is from 50 to 76



Out of this **6** participants were deemed Obese with a BMI >30



Out of the **30** participants, **25** (83%) were deemed overweight or obese by their Body Mass Index score (BMI >25). Only two were deemed a healthy weight and three did not declare.



80% of participants feel their health has improved since playing walking football



50% of participants feel their mental health has improved since playing walking football



76% of participants stated they have increased the amount of physical activity/exercise they do during a typical week since joining walking football



30% of participants feel their health limits them less since playing walking football



80% of participants have made new friends and improved their social circle through walking football



23% of participants feel less socially isolated since joining walking football



36.7% of participants have started to take part in other physical activities including walking, running, cycling etc since playing walking football



36.7% of participants noted they have made a positive influence on the rest of their family to become more physically active since taking part in walking football

What are your reasons for playing walking football?

(more than one answer could be chosen by participants)

For a social activity: **18**



For health improvement: **19**



For fitness improvement: **16**



To continue my involvement in football: **12**



To be part of a team: **9**



To develop confidence: **3**



To work towards success with teammates: **0**

Since starting to play walking football have you experienced any of the following?

Reduced weight: **11**



Reduced number of medicines being prescribed by their doctor: **0**

Reduction in blood pressure: **4**



Improved social interaction with their peers: **4**



Increased amount of physical activity done per week: **17**



An injury from normal daily activities: **1**



An injury from walking football: **2**



Participant Quotes

"Fantastic! Can't praise it enough, great effort from the Organizers at Leyton Orient Trust" – **Tony Wahlhaus**

"It's good to get back playing football which has improved my mood" – **Edward Shipp**

"We all belong to an active generation and it is very rewarding to see an inclusive group of seniors not only thoroughly enjoying themselves (like school kids!!) but also improving their football skills and fitness - long may it continue!" – **Geoff Riding**

"My daughter said "if an old man like me can do activity, she should and has taken up running every week and recently did the Sports Relief 10K run. My son, not to be beaten by his sister, has started to cycle to work. Just the wife to go!!" – **Terry Russell**

Press Release <by Leyton Orient Trust> – Walking Football

<START>

“Peter Kitchen helps Orient kick off season with new Walking Football Programme”

Walking Football is a slow-paced version of the beautiful game aimed at the over 50s, so if you thought your footballing days were over, then think again!

A brand new pilot of weekly sessions are being held at the SCORE centre in Leyton on Thursday mornings from 11.00am to 12.00pm targeting men and women over the age of 50. The first six pilot sessions are being held between September 17th and October 29th with the cost of each session being £3.00 per week. Sessions are ‘turn up and play’ and we are pleased to announce that a very special guest, former Leyton Orient FC player Peter Kitchen will be joining us for the launch and first session on September 17th. Peter will also be taking part in a short Q&A with participants and fans after the session.

Walking Football is designed to help people keep an active lifestyle irrespective of their age or gender, as well as getting those back playing football who perhaps had to stop due to injuries.

Walking football follows the same rules as normal football except you cannot run and you cannot slide tackle. Many professional clubs use this method in training to teach their players to be comfortable on the ball and it has more recently been promoted by the NHS as a great way to keep fit and make new friends for all ages.

No specific equipment or prior experience is needed; just turn up in sporty attire wearing trainers or indoor astro turf shoes (no studs), you’ll also need to bring shin pads and a drink too. The sport is non-contact and a great way to make new friends and socialise. Sessions will be held indoors and so will take place whatever the weather!

If you have any questions or would like to find out further details, please get in touch with Phill Smith via email: phillip.smith@leytonorienttrust.org or via phone: 020 8556 5973

<END>

Orient Host Inaugural Walking Football Tournament

Thursday 24th March marked the inaugural Leyton Orient Trust Walking Football Tournament following a flourishing season for the initiative.

Held at the SCORE centre in Leyton, the tournament saw players and teams of all ages (50+) from across East London take part. The tournament was deemed a huge success by everyone involved.

“The day was brilliant, had lots of fun and great to see so many people taking part, I can’t wait for the next one!” said Paul, one of the walking footballers.

“This is our very first tournament and it’s great to see so many people getting involved and proving age is no barrier when it comes to physical activity. The games were played in excellent spirit and there was a real buzz throughout!” said Phillip Smith, Health and Wellbeing Activator

Taking the crown on the day were ‘Orient Old Boys’ who ended the tournament unbeaten with a sturdy defensive display. They will now go on to represent Orient in the Football League Trust regional tournament in May.

Players also had a surprise visit from former O, Peter Kitchen who had hoped to also participate but had to miss out through injury. Peter who is the ambassador for the O’s walking football was on hand

to congratulate everyone who took part and handed out the trophy to the winning team. "It was a real pleasure to present the trophies in the first LOFC Trust, Walking football tournament and to see so many players turning up. When we first launched the Walking Football initiative last September, there were only a handful of participants, but the numbers have increased significantly in recent months and it is now a huge success, thanks to the hard work and dedication of Phill Smith, Howard and Junior at the LOFC trust. It was so good to see older footballers still able to participate in the game they love, but there were also lots of older participants who have hardly ever played the game before, so it is also a social occasion as well as a way to still keep active no matter how fit you may have been in the past " "A huge congratulations to Orient Old Boys on their win and an even bigger thank you to everyone who contributed to make this programme such a success! We look forward to continuing the programme after Easter with you all and welcoming even more participants as the programme continues to grow over the coming months"

If you're looking to get active and are over 50 then walking football could be the activity for you, we now run sessions at four venues across East London for all abilities including new sessions in Tower Hamlets and Hackney launching this summer. Find out when and where all of our sessions take place by clicking [HERE](#) or by contacting Phillip Smith – phillip.smith@leytonorienttrust.org or 020 8556 5973

Orient take top spot at latest walking football tournament

On Friday 27th May the Orient walking football team travelled to West London and Craven Cottage to take part in the Fulham FC Walking Football Cup. The O's were joined by other represented teams from a number of football league clubs including Fulham, Watford, Charlton and AFC Wimbledon as well as local team Walton FC. Orient took two teams of players who currently participate in the weekly walking football sessions at SCORE with ages ranging from 50 to 76 years young.

All teams played against each other in a round robin format with the first game pitting the Orient teams against each other - the Orient Reds edging the victory 2-0. Despite losing their second game against Walton 1, Orient Reds went on a five game winning streak to end with the record of 6 wins and 1 loss along with 6 clean sheets in the process. Orient Blues ended with the record of 2 wins, 1 draw and 3 losses which led the teams to finish 1st and 4th respectively - a fantastic effort, particularly for a number of the group who have not played competitively in walking football before.

Frank Longsworth one of the O's players whose first time it was taking part in a walking football tournament noted: 'For me walking football is the perfect way to keep fit as it involves exercise, co-ordination and reactions; the games are reasonably competitive but the overall ethos is about involvement and fun. This was the first time I've played in a competition and it was at Craven Cottage, as a football fan it was an amazing experience to play on a league ground and an ambition that I never thought I would achieve in my retirement.

Phillip Smith, Health and Wellbeing Activator for Leyton Orient Trust said "it's great for us to be able to offer such opportunities for the group to play against other teams as part of our partnerships with other clubs. The social factor in getting everyone together to play as a team has huge benefits and coupled with the fact that they got to play on the pitch at Craven Cottage too is an experience none of them will forget! A big thank you to the Fulham Foundation for putting on such a successful event and well done to all of the participants involved!"

Leyton Orient achieved the double on the day with Orient player Paul Browne also picking up the player of the tournament award too.

The walking football programme at Orient is open to anyone aged 50+ and for all abilities. Weekly sessions currently run at the SCORE centre in Leyton with a new outdoor summer session also starting in Hackney on Mabley Green on June 20th

For more information on how to get involved or to find out about the new sessions starting in Hackney, Tower Hamlets or Waltham Forest; Please contact Phillip Smith: phillip.smith@leytonorienttrust.org or 020 8556 5973

LEYTON ORIENT WALKING FOOTBALL CLUB

ORAL HISTORY

The Early Years



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